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SUBJECT Medical Treatment and Conditions in POW Camps

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THIS IS UNEVALUATED INFORMATION

Immunization

1. [redacted] two immunizations which [redacted] knowledge were to prevent typhoid fever. [redacted] at no time did [redacted] immunizations being given to any POWs in the USSR before 1946.
2. The immunizations [redacted] were given under the supervision of a Soviet woman doctor [redacted] by a German POW doctor in the camp. Although there were about 4500 prisoners at Maksay at the time, there was only one hypodermic needle available for the immunization of all the prisoners. [redacted] All of the prisoners received this preventive treatment because Soviet camp officials were concerned by the high death rate that was cutting down the prisoner labor force. It was at that time [redacted] the Soviet camp officials express considerable concern over typhoid fever and shortly thereafter, the immunization program took place. The two immunizations [redacted] were given [redacted] in the space of a very short time, [redacted] number of days in between. [redacted] this camp for three years and these two immunizations were all [redacted] and to the [redacted] POWs received more than two immunizations during their stay in this camp.
3. There were some prisoners in the Maksay camp suffering from malaria who received shots in connection with the treatment of malaria. However, only those prisoners who had malaria received malaria shots because there was not enough malaria serum to immunize all of the POWs.

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Prevalent Diseases

4. The most prevalent diseases in all of the POW camps were, in order of incidence: dysentery, typhus, typhoid, and a disease known as "kopfroze" which was similar to an eczema of the head and which was accompanied with high fever. There was also considerable malaria. However, the worst of all diseases was plain starvation which I believe caused more deaths than any of the other diseases.

Treatment of Patients

5. At the Marshansk camp, which had a capacity of 20 thousand to 25 thousand POWs, there was one male Soviet doctor in charge whose responsibility appeared to be to decide which of the POWs were able to work and which were not. The treatment of patients at Marshansk was left to the feldshers. In addition to Soviet feldshers at this camp, there were also Hungarian and Czechoslovakian feldshers but there were no German feldshers. Treatment of the prisoners was very limited and in some cases non-existent because of the lack of medical supplies. [redacted] no German POW doctors at Marshansk although there were several Hungarian POW doctors.
6. At Maksay where the capacity of the camp was five thousand POWs, to the best of my knowledge there was regularly only one male Soviet doctor in charge, although at different times other male and female doctors appeared in the camp. There were also about 20 POW doctors, including German, Rumanian and Hungarian POWs and several POW feldshers. There was also one dentist although [redacted] any dental treatment [redacted]
7. At one time in late 1946 there were over two thousand sick prisoners at Maksay and even though it was impossible for the one Soviet doctor to see all the patients to determine if they could work, none of the POW doctors were allowed to decide whether a prisoner was able to work or not.
8. There was one Soviet feldsher at Maksay who was in complete charge of all medication to sick prisoners. The 20 POW doctors were each given a certain area of the camp to take care of as well as certain sick barracks. Patients with contagious diseases were placed in special barracks. These doctors had nothing to do except visit the patients and talk with them because they had no access to any of the camp medicines and they were not allowed to make diagnoses or to decide which of the prisoners were unable to work.
9. The usual method of treatment and medication was most inefficient. The 20 German, Rumanian and Hungarian POW doctors each night reported to the Soviet feldsher how many sick prisoners he had in his particular camp area and as far as possible, summarize the diagnosis in each case. At the same time, the feldsher also received a report from the sick or hospital barracks and he then compared the two lists and decided how to dispense the medications he had available. [redacted] the only medication dispensed by the feldsher was aspirin in those cases where he personally thought it necessary. Actually, only a small number of the persons on the two sick lists received aspirin from the feldsher, who always administered it personally.
10. There were exceptions to this general procedure of the dispensing of medication. [redacted] of these exceptions took place [redacted]

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it was at this time that a commission of medical doctors from Moscow inspected the medical facilities at the camp; and just prior to the arrival of the Moscow commission, the head doctor came through the hospital barracks and happened [redacted] This doctor then said to one of the Hungarian POW doctor [redacted] and the next day a woman doctor named (fnu) Goldstein [redacted] During the next eight days [redacted] three injections which reduced the fever [redacted] the injections were penicillin.

11. [redacted] hospital and had been at Maksay for some time, [redacted] that the commission of medical doctors from Moscow made periodic visits which were known about eight days before their arrival at the camp because the Soviet doctor in charge always called all of the POW doctors and feldshers into his office and told them that all the patients were to be washed, shaved and told to answer "We have enough to eat" if they were asked. During the time the commission was in the camp, patients received fair treatment; but after they had departed, it was the same story all over again. The head of the medical commission was a general of the army and he personally visited all of the sick barracks as well as the kitchen. [redacted] in the kitchen on one of these inspections and watched this general put a spoon in one of the soup caldrons, stir it around and sample the food. His remarks were "Good food, good food" and he ate a liberal portion. That night, the general had a review of all the POWs and he asked one man why he was so thin and looked so starved. The prisoner said the soup was thin and the general said "I saw it today; what thick soup you have."

Diagnoses

12. As I have stated above, the Soviet doctor in charge made all diagnoses that were made and none of the POW doctors were ever allowed to make diagnoses. Maksay was a POW labor camp and every prisoner who could possibly do any work was needed. The Soviet camp officials were afraid that the POW doctors, particularly the Germans, would feel sympathetic for German prisoners and leave at the camp some sick prisoners who might still be able to do some work.
13. Diagnoses were very inaccurate and were made without any real examination. The routine procedure called for the sick prisoners to enter the doctor's office where the patient was given a very brief opportunity to describe his pains. The doctor then arbitrarily made his diagnosis. In some cases, a patient's temperature was then taken and if it was 104° or above, he was sent to the hospital or sick barracks; but if it was below that, he was usually sent back to his barracks and he had to go out and work the next day. As I have mentioned above, except for unusual periods of time, the only medication was aspirin.
14. There was only one regular examination period each day and that was between six and seven o'clock in the evening. However, the camp doctor did have afternoon office hours for the sick patients in the camp. The evening office hour was for prisoners after they returned from work; but if any prisoner became ill during the night, he still had to go out to work the next day because there were no examinations in the morning and he had no chance at the afternoon office hours.

Attitude of Medical Personnel Toward the Patients

15. The attitude of Soviet doctors and feldshers toward German patients depended entirely on the person. [redacted] one Soviet doctor from Georgia at Maksay

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who was terrible. He did not seem to care one bit about the German patients and appeared happy if they died. On the other hand, Soviet doctors and particularly feldshers who expressed sympathy toward the patients and helped them as much as possible with the limited supplies and facilities available. At one time at Maksay, there was a woman Soviet doctor who actually was of German nationality from the Volga and she was especially sympathetic. She talked German to the prisoners; but as a result of trying to help them too much and showing too much sympathy, she herself was transferred from this camp.

16. Every once in a while, the camp commander would make the announcement that there would not be any sick prisoners tomorrow and that everyone in the camp would go out to work. So the next day there was no one sick, everybody went out to work and that night, the prisoner population of the camp decreased by the death of a number of prisoners during the day who were actually too sick to have left their barracks. [redacted] another occasion when the camp commander decided that there would only be 15 prisoners sick on a certain day and he announced that all the other prisoners were all right and would go to work. It was all completely unreasonable.

Description of Hospital Facilities

17. At Marshansk, there was a main hospital in one of the permanent buildings but it was used almost exclusively for sick Soviet Army personnel. The prisoner hospital were barracks and in addition, there was a very primitive infirmary which would not be recognized as such in the US.
18. At Maksay, a number of barracks served as the hospital. There was also an infirmary which served as the doctor's office. Each barracks held up to 100 sick patients. Both the sick barracks and the regular prisoner barracks at this camp were actually large holes in the ground over which a roof had been placed and sand placed on the roofs. There were very few above-ground buildings, except for the permanent stone buildings, because of the very cold weather and snow cover. The hospital barracks were not heated and there were no beds in them, the patients being stretched out in rows on wooden planks over the dirt floor. There were no mattresses but every two prisoners shared one blanket. Prisoners had very little clothing.
19. The floor level of the barracks was about two meters below the level of the ground and it was reached by steps at one end of the hole. All of the barracks originally had wooden planks for floor covering but because previous prisoners had taken up the planks during cold spells and burned them for heat, some of the barracks only had sand or dirt floors. Plank floors that had been burned were never replaced by the Soviet camp officials. Each barracks had two windows in front and two windows in back, each about one foot above the ground level. Double-deck bunks in the regular POW barracks provided accommodations for 200 prisoners.
20. The German POW doctors in charge of the sick or hospital barracks tried to keep them as clean as possible which was difficult under the circumstance of partially dirt floors. The camp doctor did not care about cleanliness and none of the prisoners were washed after the initial admittance except on special occasions. Washing facilities for the prisoners were not made available to the German POW doctors.
21. Sick prisoners were fed three times a day, receiving 500 grams of soup and two pieces of white bread for breakfast and a small bowl of rice or a wheat and barley mixture with two pieces of bread at the noon and evening meals. The soup for sick prisoners was supposed to be better than what the so-called

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well prisoners received. The meals were sometimes served by German and Hungarian fieldshers if they were available or by other prisoners. This was a coveted prison task because it afforded the opportunity to obtain extra food in the case of those patients who had just died but for whom a ration had been provided. When the Soviet doctor from Georgia was the chief medical officer of the camp, no German fieldshers were allowed to serve the patients.

Efforts To Keep Camp Clean

22. The POWs in the Maksay camp did what they could to keep it clean and free from lice but efforts in this direction were not very successful. Prior to the use of Maksay for German POWs, it had been used for Soviet political prisoners who left it in a miserable and very dirty condition upon being transferred from it. It was never possible to completely rid any of the barracks of lice. Because of the dirt walls and floors, it was almost impossible to keep the barracks clean. The only permanent stone buildings at Maksay were the infirmary, the administration building, barracks for Soviet personnel and the kitchen.

23. There was always a shortage of food at all of the POW camps [redacted]. That was one of the worst parts of being a prisoner of war.

Attempts to Proselytize into Communist Party

24. In the four POW camps [redacted] including Marshansk, Maksay, and two other camps in the Orsk area, no attempts were ever made [redacted] into the Communist Party. These four camps were known as labor camps and the entire effort was directed toward squeezing out as much work from the prisoners as possible. Although the prisoners were exposed on a regular basis to Communist propaganda, no real effort was made to intensify influence the prisoners to become Communists because there was no time for this.

25. [redacted] prisoners that in the rest camps, the treatment was different and serious attempts were made to proselytize prisoners into the Communist Party. There was one rest camp in Mednogorsk where the prisoners were thoroughly indoctrinated but it did not make much sense because when a German prisoner reached a rest camp, it was too late for indoctrination. Most of the rest camp prisoners died anyway.

26. There was an anti-Fascist officer in the Maksay camp who seemed to be in charge of disseminating propaganda. He organized what was known as a "Red Corner" in each barracks and the POWs that were drafted for this "Red Corner" detail put up slogans, pictures and other propaganda. [redacted] that the director of the "Red Corner" in one of the barracks [redacted] assigned was a German junior officer who definitely did not want this job but was forced to do it. He was also forced to talk the Communist line in lectures to the other POWs. However, there were other POWs in the "Red Corner" who voluntarily joined the anti-Fascist office because the food rations were doubled for these people.

27. [redacted] the Soviet camp personnel actually wanted to make members of the Communist Party out of any of the prisoners. They wanted to spread as thoroughly as possible Communist propaganda but membership in the party was something else. What was actually wanted in the labor camps was work, work, work.

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